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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

(655) File DC/R

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: May 21, 1954

SUBJECT: Nicaraguan and Costa Rican Difficulties regarding Guatemala

PARTICIPANTS: Ambassador Guillermo Sevilla-Sacasa of Nicaragua
Mr. Holland, ARA

COPIES TO: MID
S - The Secretary
G - Mr. Murphy
ARA - Ambassadors Donnelly and Pawley

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The Ambassador told me that his Government has worked out a plan regarding the Guatemalan question. Nicaragua has sent a harsh note to Costa Rica complaining of the latter's alleged participation in the attempt on President Somoza's life. He expects that Costa Rica will ask the OAS to appoint a commission under the Bogotá Pact to investigate the difficulties. Nicaragua proposes to ask instead that a commission be appointed under the Rio Treaty to investigate all problems in Central America, including Guatemala.

I stated that I thought this plan would be unwise. On any decision regarding Guatemala it would almost inevitably cause Costa Rica to support that country. It would strengthen the ties now existing between Costa Rica and Guatemala and which are inimical to the best interests of Nicaragua. On the other hand, if the Guatemalan question is separately considered and if Costa Rica votes with the majority against Guatemala, then the effect will be to strengthen the ties between Costa Rica and Nicaragua, diminish the difficulties between them and tend to isolate the present Communist-tainted Government in Guatemala.

I asked the Ambassador's opinion as to a possible alternative course of action under which the Guatemalan question would be separately considered. Nicaragua, El Salvador and Honduras would ask that a meeting be called to consider and act upon the Guatemalan problem. The United States would then take this request up with the other nations of the hemisphere, stating that we felt that measures

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as harsh as the application to Guatemala of the Caracas Resolution together with stern economic sanctions were not needed to meet the present situation. The United States would recommend, instead, that a meeting be called to determine that such shipments by Iron Curtain countries of arms to this hemisphere as occurred in the Alfhelm case constituted a threat to the integrity of the State to which the shipment was made and a threat to the peace of the Americas. We would recommend that the only sanction adopted be an agreement that all States would take those measures necessary to prevent the recurrence of such shipments and to prevent the movement of persons traveling in the interests of international Communism. Under such sanctions it would be possible to stop and examine ships and planes entering or leaving Guatemala where that seemed desirable.

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The Ambassador said that he felt sure his Government would readily approve such a plan; that Nicaragua has already taken up with the Governments of El Salvador and of Honduras a proposal that the three Governments jointly call a meeting. He agreed to advise me promptly of the results of those overtures.

I stated that the United States had not yet decided on any course of action; that we were awaiting complete information on all aspects of the Alfhelm incident.

ARA:HFHolland:dwm